

## **H1N1 Hotline Answer Sheet**

### **Hotline Answers/H1N1-17A**

**Date: Oct. 28, 2009**

**Time: 8:30 p.m.**

***Updates are in italics***

**Recorded Information Line—415-5299**

**Tollfree hotline – 1-866-528-3501—Mondays through Fridays, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m**

**SRHD- appointment line – 509-324-1648**

**Tollfree Appointment Line – 1-877-415-5225 (inactive today)**

### **Vaccine Priority Groups as identified by the Centers for Disease Control**

- **Pregnant women**
- **People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old**
- **Anyone from age 6 months through 24 years**
- **People ages 25 through 64 with chronic health conditions**
- **Healthcare and emergency response workers**

### **Is there H1N1 flu in northern Idaho?**

Yes. At least 28 cases have been confirmed in the five northern counties since Sept. 1, 2009. Statewide, flu activity is reported as widespread. H1N1 most likely has contributed to the death of seven people in Idaho since Sept. 1, including a Post Falls man in his 30s and a Post Falls man in his 50s.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Sudden fever of about 100 degrees, coughing, sore throat, sneezing, runny nose, headache, body aches, chills and heavy fatigue. Some people, primarily children, have also had diarrhea and/or vomiting.

### **Is the H1N1 vaccine here?**

The H1N1 vaccine started arriving in small amounts in northern Idaho Oct. 5. On Oct. 19, vaccinations started in the schools for students who have parental consent. On Oct. 24, PHD provided by appointment 1,500 vaccinations to people in the five northern counties considered the target population for the H1N1 vaccine:

- **Pregnant women**

- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old
- Anyone between the ages of 6 months and 24 years
- People age 25 through 64 with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or a condition that weakens the immune system
- Healthcare and emergency response workers

Some private providers—doctors, private clinics--have received limited amounts of vaccine for people in the vaccination target population (listed above). More vaccine will be delivered to private providers as it arrives. People should call their doctors to find out if they're providing the vaccine.

PHD will list doctors who offer the vaccine on its website when the vaccine is available to the general public. Until then, call your doctor's office to find out if it will provide the H1N1 vaccine to patients.

Schools will notify parents when the vaccine will be given to their students. Children are a vaccination priority because H1N1 hits them in the greatest numbers. The most effective way to slow the spread of the virus is to vaccinate the children.

### **Why can't I get the vaccine anywhere right now?**

Production of the vaccine for the flu shot is taking longer than expected so shipments of vaccine contain primarily the nasal spray and much smaller amounts that originally promised. The nasal spray is appropriate only for people between the ages of 2 and 49 who are healthy—no underlying health problems. Some doctors have the nasal spray for patients, but they can't have any health problems. Call your doctor and ask if he or she has vaccine available to patients. Once we receive vaccine shipments that include flu shots, we'll schedule more vaccinations clinics and post them on our website—[www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov).

### **I heard school vaccinations were postponed. What's going on?**

Some school vaccinations were postponed this week because expected amounts of vaccine didn't arrive in northern Idaho. Schools that were scheduled for vaccinations on Tuesday and Wednesday this week were rescheduled for Nov. 9 and 10. Vaccinations in middle schools and high schools were pushed back a month and will start on Dec. 2 provided that an adequate amount of vaccine arrives.

### **I tried to get an appointment for the Saturday public vaccination clinic but couldn't get through. Was something wrong with your phone lines?**

More than 6,000 people tried to get through on the 10 lines that were open for appointments. Many people waited close to an hour on hold for one of the 1,500

available appointments in the five northern counties. Many people were disappointed and understandably frustrated when they didn't get through, but more vaccination clinics are planned later this fall as more vaccine arrives.

Some people didn't show up for the appointments and the vaccine reserved for them is going to private medical providers in our communities. You can call your doctor's office and find out if he or she has received vaccine and if you're eligible for it.

### **If I had H1N1, do I need the vaccine?**

Unless you took an expensive test through your doctor's office or the hospital to confirm the H1N1 virus, you don't know for certain that you had H1N1. The rapid nasal swab test most commonly done identifies the presence of the influenza A virus, which could be either H1N1 or seasonal flu. Because seasonal flu isn't in the area now, it's reasonable to assume the influenza A virus is H1N1.

The vaccine will help protect you the rest of the season if you didn't have H1N1 and it won't harm you if you did have H1N1.

### **What will the vaccine cost and where will I get it?**

The H1N1 vaccine is free. Panhandle Health District will offer public vaccination clinics this fall in each of the five northern counties. The first clinic was Saturday, Oct. 24, for people who fit the vaccine target populations. (listed above).

Panhandle Health District also is working with the schools to vaccinate all children who want the vaccine. The vaccinations in the schools and at the public vaccination clinics will cost patients nothing. Parents, homeschooled children and children not attending public or private schools can get their vaccinations at the public vaccination clinics or from their doctor if their doctor is providing the vaccine.

Some doctors will offer the vaccine in their offices to their patients. The vaccine will be free but there may be a charge for an office visit or to cover the costs of storing the vaccine and a nurse to give the vaccination. Call your doctor to find out if he or she has the vaccine and what it will cost.

PHD will list vaccine locations and providers on its website—[www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov)—when adequate supplies of vaccine arrive.

### **When is the next public vaccination clinic in our area?**

We'll announce the next scheduled public vaccination clinic on our website and in the media after we receive an adequate amount of vaccine.

### **If I have high blood pressure, do I fit in a vaccine target group?**

Chronic diseases or conditions that weaken the immune system include:

- Cancer
- Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
- Chronic lung disease [such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)]
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Neurological disorders (such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, brain or spinal cord injuries, moderate to profound intellectual disability [mental retardation] or developmental delay)
- Neuromuscular disorders (such as muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)
- Weakened immune systems (such as people with HIV or AIDS or who are on medications that weaken the immune system )

### **My kids are homeschooled. Where can they get the vaccination?**

Homeschooled children and children not attending public or private schools can get their vaccinations at the public vaccination clinics or from their doctor if their doctor is providing the vaccine. Call your doctor's office to find out if he or she will have the vaccine for patients.

### **If I had the season flu shot, how long should I wait to have the H1N1 vaccination?**

You can have both shots in different arms on the same day. If you have the flu mist, you need at least 28 days between the seasonal flu vaccine mist and the H1N1 vaccine mist.

### **What is the difference between the flu mist and the flu shot?**

The vaccine in the flu mist is for people from age 2 through age 49 who have no underlying health conditions. Flu mist is made with a weakened live virus. The rate of transmission is extremely low, .5 -2.4 percent compared to the transmission rate after exposure to someone who is sick, which is 30 percent. The choice is between a 2 percent chance of transmitting a weakened virus or a 30 percent chance of catching a full-strength virus.

The flu shot is made from an inactive (killed) virus. It is injected into the muscle. Most people can have the flu shot unless they're allergic to eggs or any ingredients in the shot. The list of ingredients can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## **How safe is the vaccine?**

The FDA approved the vaccine on Sept. 15. The H1N1 vaccine underwent the same FDA manufacturing oversight, product quality testing and lot release procedures that apply to seasonal flu vaccines.

Like the seasonal flu vaccine, the H1N1 vaccine is being produced in forms that contain Thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative, and in forms that don't contain Thimerosal. A can of tuna contains more mercury than the flu vaccine. People with severe or life-threatening allergies to chicken eggs should not be vaccinated.

Clinical tests on the vaccine showed it offers good protection against the H1N1 virus with few reactions. The most common reaction to the flu shot was soreness, redness, tenderness and swelling where the shot was given. Some people have had headaches, muscle aches, fever or nausea. These reactions typically occur soon after the shot is given and last a day or two.

The nasal flu mist is made with a weakened live flu virus and is approved only for people age 2 to 49 who are in good health. Reactions to the flu mist also have been few, but have included a runny nose, congestion or cough, fever, headaches and muscle aches, wheezing, stomach aches or vomiting or diarrhea.

Life-threatening reactions to either vaccine are very rare. If you've had no reaction to the seasonal influenza vaccine, you're unlikely to have a reaction to the H1N1 influenza vaccine.

For more detailed information on Vaccine Safety, visit [www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov) and click on Vaccine Safety. There are links to credible information on vaccine testing, ingredients, thimerosal and more.

## **Why is the vaccine going to schoolchildren first?**

The H1N1 virus has hit the under-25 age group in the greatest numbers. Most people of that age are in school where they easily spread the virus. The Centers for Disease Control had identified the under-25 age group as a priority for H1N1 vaccination. Also, the first vaccine we received is the nasal flu mist, which is appropriate only for healthy people age 2 to 49 and is often preferred by school-age children to the flu shot.

The most effective way to slow the spread of the virus is to vaccinate the young age group. As vaccine becomes available, the schools will be notified and will share their vaccination dates with parents.

## **When will the vaccine be available to the public?**

The public is invited to attend public vaccination clinics in all five counties this fall. Dates of the public clinics will be publicized in the media and on the PHD website, [www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov), as adequate amounts of vaccine arrive. The first public clinic was Oct. 24 for people who need protection from the H1N1 virus the most:

- Pregnant women;
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age;
- Anyone from age 6 months through 24 years;
- People from age 25 through age 64 with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or any condition that weakens the immune system;
- Healthcare and emergency response workers.

### **Do students have to have the H1N1 vaccination?**

No. Students will bring a permission slip home for a parent's signature that OKs their vaccination. Children who have no signed permission slip won't be vaccinated. The PHD website—[www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov)—has a copy of the permission slip that you can print if your child doesn't bring home a permission slip. Parents are asked to wait for their vaccinations until our area receives enough vaccine for public clinics later this fall so that there is a sufficient amount of vaccine for the children.

### **Who does the vaccinating in the schools?**

Teams of nurses from the health district will vaccinate the children. They'll also vaccinate the public when vaccine is available for public vaccinations.

### **How many students are getting the vaccination?**

The numbers of students vary from about 30 percent to 60 percent, but average about 45 percent.

### **What should I do if I think I have H1N1 before the vaccine is available?**

Stay home if you have the symptoms including a fever and have no health problems such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease. Most people recover from the flu on their own at home.

- If you're pregnant, call your doctor and let him or her know your symptoms.
- Call your doctor if you have health problems that the flu could complicate.

- When you call in sick to your workplace or school, let them know you have respiratory symptoms that could be contagious.

### **How should I care for myself at home?**

Drink plenty of clear fluids to keep from becoming dehydrated. Over-the-counter cold and flu medications may help relieve symptoms. Acetaminophen such as Tylenol and ibuprofen can be taken to lower fever. Get plenty of rest. Cough and sneeze into a tissue and then throw the tissue into a trash can. Keep away from other people.

Get medical care right away if:

- You're having trouble breathing or chest pain
- You're vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- You're having seizures
- Your lips are purple or blue
- You're having signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing or lack of urination.

### **How long should I stay home?**

You should stay home until your fever is gone without the aid of medication for 24 hours.

### **Do I care for my kids the same way?**

Children—that's anyone 18 years old or younger—shouldn't have aspirin or any medication that contains aspirin. Children ages 5-18 can take over-the-counter medicines that don't contain aspirin. Children 0-4 should not be given over-the-counter medicines without first talking to your doctor.

Keep your children home from school and away from others until their fever is gone without the help of medication for at least 24 hours.

### **I had a seasonal flu shot. Will that protect me?**

The seasonal flu shot will help protect you from the seasonal flu, but not from H1N1. H1N1 is a different flu virus than the seasonal flu vaccine targets.

### **Should everyone get an H1N1 vaccination?**

That's up to each individual, although people allergic to eggs should not. The vaccination will help stop the virus from spreading. H1N1 has caused complications and worse in several groups. Health experts recommend that people in those groups get the vaccination first. They are:

- Pregnant women

- Everyone from 6 months old through 24
- People age 25 to 65 with health problems such as asthma, diabetes, health disease and other conditions that weaken the immune system.

Health experts also recommend that health care workers and emergency responders get the vaccination first and anyone who lives with or cares for children younger than 6 months. Children younger than 6 months old are too young for the vaccine.

### **What information should I bring with me to the public vaccination clinic?**

You don't need to bring any information or identification. The vaccination is for anyone who wants it. You will fill out a simple form at the clinic, but it won't ask for any information more complicated than your name and birthdate.

### **I heard I had to get two shots. Is that right?**

Everyone 10 and older will need one dose of H1N1 vaccine for protection.  
 | Everyone younger than 10 will need a booster dose 24 to 28 days after the first dose.

### **What should I do to keep from getting the flu?**

- Get vaccinated.
- Wash your hands! Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing into them. Wash your hands after touching hard surfaces, like doorknobs or light switches, which someone with flu germs may have touched.
- Keep three to six feet away from anyone who is sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to stay in good general health—get plenty of sleep, stay physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.
- If you do get sick, stay home and don't infect others.

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